

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2600

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Commerce & Labor

**Title:** An act relating to requiring professionals working in the building trades to wear and visibly display licenses and certificates.

**Brief Description:** Requiring construction contractors to display their licenses and certificates.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Moeller, Conway, Williams, Lovick, Green, Murray, Roberts and Cody.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Commerce & Labor: 1/25/06, 1/26/06 [DPS].

### Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires persons doing electrical, plumbing, and conveyance work to wear and visibly display their license or certificate, which must include photo identification.
- Does not require persons to wear and display their license or certificate if doing so would create a danger or unsafe condition for the person or the public.
- Requires counties and cities to refer "alleged or apparent" violations of the requirement that persons doing electrical, plumbing, and conveyance work wear and visibly display their license or certificate to the Department of Labor and Industries for investigation and appropriate enforcement action.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Conway, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Hudgins, Kenney and McCoy.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Condotta, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Crouse and Holmquist.

**Staff:** Jill Reinmuth (786-7134).

**Background:**

The Department of Labor and Industries (Department) administers and enforces state laws governing certain construction-related trades. These laws require persons who perform electrical, plumbing, or conveyance work to have appropriate certificates of competency or licenses. Persons who perform such work without appropriate certificates or licenses, as well as persons who employ them, are subject to civil penalties ranging from \$250 to \$500 for violations of the electrician certification requirement, \$250 to \$1,000 for violations of the plumber certification requirement, and \$500 for violations of the elevator mechanic licensing requirement.

Counties and cities enforce the state building code, which establishes minimum construction requirements. It is composed of building, residential, mechanical, fire, and plumbing model codes.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Legislature finds that dishonest contractors sometimes hire unlicensed and uncertified persons to perform electrical, plumbing, and conveyance work. This practice gives them an unfair competitive advantage. Requiring persons to visibly display their licenses and certificates will help address the problems of the underground economy in the construction industry.

While performing electrical, plumbing, or conveyance work, persons must wear and visibly display their certificate or license, which must include photo identification. They are not required to wear and display their license or certificate if doing so would create a danger or unsafe condition for the person or the public, so long as they can produce evidence of their license or certificate.

Counties and cities must refer "alleged or apparent" violations of the requirement that persons doing electrical, plumbing, and conveyance work wear and visibly display their license or certificate to the Department of Labor and Industries (Department) for investigation and appropriate enforcement action. The Department must investigate such referrals.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

Photo identification must be included on the licenses, certificates, and permits that persons doing electrical, plumbing, and conveyance work must wear and visibly display. Violations involving persons doing plumbing work must be referred to the Department of Labor and Industries in the same manner as violations involving persons doing electrical and conveyance work.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** This requirement will discourage hiring unlicensed people. It will simplify monitoring and help enforcement. It will help deal with the underground economy. Sometimes, with unscrupulous contractors, workers drop their power tools and pick up shovels when inspectors arrive. They claim to be laborers, not electricians.

There is a disconnect between the number of state compliance officers and the demands on their time. Local inspectors are not required to verify licensing and certification.

Photo identification is especially important. We assume that the Department of Labor and Industries will issue photo identification.

Oregon has a similar requirement. The card is plastic and durable. It has not been a safety hazard.

(With concerns) We already require that the workers have their certificate on their persons. That is good enough.

**Testimony Against:** We hire certified plumbers and pipefitters, and are in favor of enforcing certification laws. We are not sure this will really help get unregistered contractors. We do not know who is going to pay for this.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Jim Moeller, prime sponsor; Pete Crow, Washington State Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters; John Mohlis, Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council of Northwest Oregon and Southwest Washington; and Philip A. Parker, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 48, Labor Round Table.

(Neutral) Pete Schmidt, Department of Labor and Industries.

(With concerns) Gary Smith, Independent Business Association.

(Opposed) Larry Stevens, Mechanical Contractors Association and National Electrical Contractors Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.